

REMARKS***Election/Restrictions***

Claims 8-14 have been withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a nonelected group I.

The Examiner has also indicated that previously submitted claims 23-29 are directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention originally claimed. While withdrawal of claims 27-29 would appear consistent with the withdrawal of non elected claims 8-14, reconsideration of this decision is strongly urged with respect to claims 23-26, which are directed to further features of the invention of elected claim 20. Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Applicant had not received any action on the merits (a restriction requirement is not an action on the merits) for any restrictable invention prior to the filing of these claims that would have prevented the Examiner from consideration of at least these claims along with elected parent claim 20. Thus, Applicants had not "constructively elected" any independent and distinct invention by original presentation for prosecution on the merits that would have prevented consideration of at least these additional claims. Accordingly, withdrawal of at least claims 23-26 from consideration by the Examiner is clearly inappropriate, and reconsideration of such withdrawal and a first action on the merits with respect to such claims is respectfully requested.

Process of making claims 8-14 and 27-29 include essentially all the limitations of product claim 20. Rejoinder of such process of making claims upon allowance of elected product claim 20 is accordingly respectfully requested.

Specification

The application has been amended at pages 8-9 to insert the cited concurrently filed application serial number (it is noted that applicants have previously submitted a copy of such copending application in the IDS filed March 17, 2005).

Drawings

The specification has also been amended at page 9 to add the reference character 131 with reference to the die of extrusion device 130 in Fig. 10. No new matter has been added.

Claim Objections

Claims 8-14, 20-22 and 27-29 are objected to because they depend from withdrawn claims. The objection is not understood at least with respect to claims 8-14 and 27-29, as such claims are withdrawn claims. With respect to claims 20-22, claim 20 has been rewritten in independent form, including all the limitations of the referenced withdrawn claim. As such amendment merely rewrites claim 20 in independent form, no new matter or new issues are raised by such amendment.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

Claims 20-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Lowry (US 6,304,703 B1). The Examiner states that Lowry teaches a tiled flat-panel large screen display (LSD) (Figs. 2A-C, 3, 5; column 1 lines 26-29, column 2 lines 60-61) comprising a face plate (1) of linear array of light-conductive pipes (fiber bundles, 6) having input faces (end receiving the signal) and output faces (5) connected by an elongate body of light-conductive optical fibers (6) (optical fibers to conduct light and therefore made of a light-conductive material) connected by alignment tabs (7) allowing multiple arrays to be stacked together to form the display (see Fig. 3). This rejection is respectfully traversed.


The present claimed invention is directed towards an integrated linear array of injection molded light-conductive pipes, each pipe comprising an input optical face and an output optical face connected by an elongated body of light-conductive material, where the pipes in the linear array are connected by integral alignment features formed during the injection molding of the light-conductive pipes (i.e., pipes and integral alignment features are formed by injecting, cooling and solidifying molten material in a light pipe mold that includes multiple elongated cavities, each having two optical end faces and cavity

contours that form at least one integral light pipe alignment feature). As acknowledged by the Examiner, structure implied by the process steps in a product-by-process claim should be considered when assessing the patentability of such claims over the prior art. In the instant case, the injection molding manufacturing process steps would be expected to impart distinctive structural characteristics to the final product, as the light pipes in the linear array and the alignment features are integrally formed. Referring to Fig. 13, e.g., a plurality of light pipes 14 having integrally molded alignment features 18 may be molded into integral linear arrays where the pipes in the linear array are connected by the alignment features, and multiple integrated linear arrays may be aligned into stacked rows to form an optical faceplate 30.

Lowry clearly does not disclose an integrated linear array of injection molded light-conductive pipes, where the pipes in the linear array are connected by integral alignment features formed during the injection molding of the light-conductive pipes. Rather, Lowry discloses the use of separately manufactured collars 13 and tiles 2 to align ends of separately manufactured individual fibers 5. The individual fibers 5 of Lowry do not form an integrated linear array of fibers, and the collars 13 and tiles 2 are further not integrally formed with the fibers 5 (whether by injection molding or any other process). The structural features of an integrated linear array of injection molded light-conductive pipes as claimed (and as embodied, e.g., in Fig. 13) are distinct from the apparatus of Lowry which appears to simply insert ends of separately formed fibers 5 into recessed orifices 4 of tiles 2. Accordingly, the claimed light pipe product specifically directed towards an injection molded product with integral injection molded alignment features is structurally distinct from the fiber optic display apparatus of Lowry, and the present claimed invention is clearly not anticipated by Lowry. While not rejected as obvious over Lowry, it is further noted that Lowry would not teach or otherwise suggest injection molded integrated linear arrays of light-conductive pipes in accordance with the present claimed invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested. A prompt and favorable action by the Examiner is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe any remaining issues may be resolved via a telephone interview, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' representative at the number below to discuss such issues.

Respectfully submitted,


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If the Examiner is unable to reach the Applicant(s) Attorney at the telephone number provided, the Examiner is requested to communicate with Eastman Kodak Company Patent Operations at (585) 477-4656.